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An important part of the Reading Coordinator's task is concerned with corrective work in the language arts. Coordinators serve as consultants to teachers. In addition, they may be expected to work with small groups of under-achievers to motivate and stimulate them to meet school requirements with some degree of success. Work may involve guidance and counseling, therapeutic instruction, planning and evaluating of progress and achievement, and developing new materials as needed. Through conferences, demonstration lessons, in-service meetings and discussions, the coordinator will assist classroom teachers with methods and materials as requested. Work should be with the entire faculty. From student records, the coordinator will get a "picture" of the child, and will help administer tests to determine deficiencies. A program of instruction should be provided to meet the needs of culturally different youth, to help each child attain some measure of success, instill confidence in pupils, and help teachers enrich their experiential backgrounds. Related duties include maintaining liaison with speech teachers and informing parents of the special help given to the children. The program should be housed in a permanent room where all books, magazines and other necessary teaching aids and professional literature will be available.

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THE ROLE OF THE READING COORDINATOR*

February 10, 1965

By Shirley McNeil

Language Arts Consultant

*Excerpt from Manual For Reading Coordinators In The Detroit Great Cities Project

Approved: L. D. Monacel

ED001005

Historical Development of Coordinator's Role

Poor readers experience difficulty in conceptualizing abstractions. It is hard for them to decipher words in the average classroom textbook. This painful inability to read results in hostility toward books and teachers of books. Unable to read, such students become academically frustrated in the book-centered reality of school. They find little or no interest in school projects related to reading, no challenge in literary pursuits of an extra-curricular nature and no stimulus in verbal gymnastics or debate. In fact in many cases they find language barriers so separate them from their more able peers and teachers that they feel like isolates, alone and wordless in a noisy world not of their making. After years of failure in the citadel of words many students find this invisible, but monumental barrier, intolerable.

Confronted by the multiplicity of problems of the retarded reader, and sensitized by feelings of defeat and rejection which they verbalize, one soon realizes that more than empathy is required if teachers expect to make school significant in their lives. In addition to liberal doses of understanding such students need concrete help from individuals who have expertise in the area of their deficiencies.

Realizing this, the Great Cities Project employs special personnel, known as Reading Coordinators, in each of the Detroit Great Cities schools to reinforce the efforts of classroom teachers and help them in the Herculean task of educating disadvantaged youth.

Originally the coordinators were called "Coaching Teachers" and were employed to instruct small classes of retarded readers in the seven demonstration schools in the Great Cities Project.[5] Emphasis, at the inception of the role, was focused on the teaching of language arts, in general, with special emphasis on remediation of basic skills.

After coaching teachers were introduced into the school setting, on a full-time basis, it became evident that these specialists would be of more benefit to faculty members of each school if they concentrated less of instructing youth, directly, and devoted more time to assisting other teachers understand and translate reading skills.

Accordingly in August of 1960 a workshop for Coaching Teachers was held to explore ways to modify and expand the original coaching role. Miss Shirley McNeil, Language Arts Consultant for the Detroit Great Cities Project, directed the Reading Workshop. Miss Ida Kravitz, a nationally-known and admired reading supervisor from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania provided invaluable consultative service and leadership for the workshop participants who endeavored to define tangible and elusive aspects of the role.

As an outgrowth of ideas conceived and finalized in the workshop, many operational aspects of the role were changed in existing Project schools.

In 1964, Project principals suggested that a new name, more in keeping with the expanded specialist-role would be appropriate and the title was officially changed to Reading Coordinator.

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[5]Barbour Junior High, Burton Elementary, Couzens Elementary, Eastern High, Franklin Elementary, Jefferson Junior High, and Marcy Elementary.

The Role of the Reading Coordinator
Revised August, 1964

An important part of the Reading Coordinator's job is concerned with corrective work in the language arts, by serving as consultants for classroom teachers. In addition, Reading Coordinators may be expected to work with small groups of underachievers to motivate and stimulate them to meet the school tasks with some degree of success. The Coordinator may work with individuals or groups of from two to fifteen pupils. The work may involve therapeutic instruction, guidance and counseling of an elementary nature, planning and evaluating of progress and achievement, developing new materials as needed.

Informal bulletins should be circulated periodically to the total faculty to help keep them informed of the current research and trends in reading.

I. The Scope of the Job

Originally language arts endeavors were confined to small group situations with emphasis on the remediation of children with severe reading handicaps. These special classes were organized and taught exclusively by the coaching teacher in each school.

The extent of problems posed by children in the Project schools, whose backgrounds delimited their potential for success in school, highlighted the need for a reading program that included extensive faculty involvement.

Through conferences, demonstration lessons, in-service meetings, and discussions, the Reading Coordinator will assist classroom teachers with methods and materials as requested.

II. Duties

1. Work with the total faculty.
2. Check student's accumulative records.
3. Glean from records:
   a. School progress
   b. Attendance
   c. Health data
   d. Testing results
   e. Anecdotal material or other material that is pertinent
4. Help administer tests to determine where pupils are deficient.
5. Use test information and informal inventories diagnostically to provide for the needs of students.

III. Organization

1. Provide a program of instruction that will:
   a. Meet the needs of culturally different youth.
   b. Help each child attain some measure of success.
   c. Empathize with children and instill confidence within them.
   d. Help teachers enrich the experiential backgrounds of their children.

IV. Related Duties

1. Observe the children in their regular classrooms at frequent intervals to note their progress, adjustment in other situations, and to discover any additional areas in which they may need particular help.
2. Keep other teachers informed of progress of children enrolled in Coordinator's class.
3. Share with faculty materials and methods which have proved successful in Project schools, locally and nationally.

4. Inform parents of the help their child is receiving. Plan conferences to explain how parents can reinforce the efforts of the school.

5. Keep Great Cities Project staff office regularly informed of progress, concerns, problems and needs through informal communications and in detailed monthly reports. A copy of each month's report should also be shared with other Great Cities special personnel in each school, when possible, and with the administrator of the school.

6. Confer with the Visiting Teacher regarding children which she may have a special interest in.

7. Work closely with school-community agent in each school to help children with reading deficiencies and their parents get better acquainted with school and seek active participation in its extended programs.

8. Be alert for physical ailments of children and for evidence of hearing or vision deficiencies. Refer these cases to the school nurse.

9. Maintain liaison with the speech teacher.

10. More vital perhaps than instruction in reading, mathematics, and other communications areas may be the teaching of personal hygiene, positive attitudes, courtesy and the enhancement of self-esteem of insecure youth.

V. Physical Surroundings and Considerations

1. Generally a single class which extends over a long period of time should not exceed fifteen pupils. Fewer students are desirable.

2. The Coordinator's program should be housed in a permanent room. It should be used exclusively, when possible, as a classroom and a resource room.

3. All books, supplies, magazines, pamphlets, and other necessary teaching aids agreed upon by the school administrators and the Great Cities staff should be on hand. Professional literature should be provided for perusal of the entire faculty.